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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 001558

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/16/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: CANADA STUDYING SUPPORT FOR AFGHAN ELECTION SECURITY

REF: STATE 131480

Classified By: PolMinCouns Scott Bellard, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Canada is well aware of the currently circulating SHAPE estimate of force contributions required for Election Support Forces (ESF) in Afghanistan, and is now actively studying the "realm of the possible" to enhance security in the run up to the 2009 Afghan elections, according to Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) Afghan Task Force deputy director Shannon Smith. Smith and DFAIT senior policy advisor David Fairchild said that they would await an analysis of the estimate, as well as further reporting on recent military and political discussions in Brussels, from Canada's NATO mission prior to formulating an in-depth response to reftel demarche.

¶2. (C) Smith cautioned that DFAIT would defer to the Department of National Defence (DND) in making any further commitment of troops for ESF, and that Canada's future force requirements to support the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics and the 2010 G-8 meetings in Canada would make it unlikely that Canada could contribute any additional forces for Afghanistan. Smith promised that DFAIT will work with DND to study possibilities on extending troop rotations and re-structuring service member leave to ensure that the maximum number of Canadian forces assigned to Afghanistan are in theater during the critical periods of the election. Fairchild emphasized that Canada was also interested in supporting the election through "non-kinetic" means and will have funding available for national and provincial civic outreach and voter registration.

¶3. (C) Fairchild plans to attend the January 10, 2009 CENTCOM planning conference on Afghanistan in Qatar. He will strive to ensure a more complete and definitive Canadian response to reftel demarche before then, but predicted that this was unlikely by December 23.

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